

LETTEE XX

LAKE IRENE, *July*
27.

YESTERDAY we marched through narrow defiles
and along
hillsides to this lake, without seeing a tent,
a man, or
even a sheep or goat, following a stream
which bears
several names and receives several torrents
which burst,
full grown, from powerful springs in the
mountain sides
—a frequent phenomenon in this country—
from its
source till its entrance into this lake.
Its two
sides differ remarkably. On the right bank
rise the
magnificent ranges which form Shuturun,
broken up
into precipices, deep ravines, and peaks, all
rocky and
shapely, and absolutely denuded of soil. The
mountains
on the left bank are great shapeless masses of
bare gravel
rising into the high but blunt summit of the
Sefid Kuh,
with only occasional outcrops of rock; here
and there
among the crevices of the rocky spurs of
Shuturun the
Juniperus excelsa plants itself; otherwise, on
the sun-
scorched gravel only low tamarisk bushes,
yellow salvias,
a few belated campanulas, and a very lovely
blue *Tricho-*
desma mollis remain.

On reaching the top of a very long
ascent there was
a unique surprise, for below, walled in by
precipitous
mountain sides, lies a lake of wonderful
beauty, owing
to its indescribable colour. Wild, fierce, and

rocky are
the high mountains in which this gem is set,
and now
verdureless, except that in some places
where their steep